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CONTACT: Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

****FACT SHEET AND REMARKS INCLUDED****

**KENNEDY, LUGAR WELCOME STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO FOSTER
CULTURAL AWARENESS**

WASHINGTON, D.C— Today, Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Richard G. Lugar welcomed 250 students from around the world to promote cultural awareness and understanding. Senators Kennedy and Lugar founded the Cultural Bridges program in October of 2002 after the September 11th terrorist attacks. The program provides scholarships for secondary school students from countries with significant Muslim populations. Students live with host families, engage in activities to learn about American society, and to help educate Americans about other countries and cultures.

"We believe that the people of the United States and the people of the Islamic world can do more to understand each other and work together so that all our peoples can live in peace," Senator Kennedy said, "The challenge we share – you and your families at home, the Americans you've lived and studied with, our citizens and your citizens – is to understand each others' ideals and aspirations, and avoid the negative stereotypes."

The goals of the Cultural Bridges program include expanding communication between people in the United States and participating countries to promote mutual understanding and respect. The program also works to promote international security and peace by educating participants about other cultures to develop a better informed citizenry able to deal more effectively with international issues.

This year's participants come from 25 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, and the West Bank and Gaza. Two students, one from Lebanon and one from Yemen, lived with host families in Methuen and Andover, Massachusetts.

Below are Senator Kennedy's remarks, followed by a fact sheet on Cultural Bridges:

STATEMENT BY SENATOR KENNEDY AT CULTURAL BRIDGES RECEPTION

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome to the Senate. We're grateful that so many of you could join us to honor the students with us today and celebrate the continuing success of the Cultural Bridges/Youth Exchange and Study program.

Senator Lugar and I are very proud of the Cultural Bridges Program. We're pleased to welcome Miller Crouch, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs of the State Department, who has done an extraordinary job of making the program the great success it is today.

I also commend Jeff Watson, the President of AYUSA International and its consortium partners. Their work with students, families, schools and communities is indispensable. This public private partnership is an example of America at its best – and crucially important to building understanding between the United States and the Muslim world.

Since 2003 almost two thousand students from Africa, the Middle East and Asia have had the opportunity to learn what life is like in the United States.

This year alone, 674 students from 25 countries have been visiting America. They've lived with families in 45 states and Washington, DC. This is the final week of their scholarship, and I am honored to welcome so many of them to the Senate.

As you've been exploring Washington this week, you've seen crowds of American students your age doing the same thing - walking along the Mall, visiting the Capitol, Congress, and the White House. The monuments and museums you see are inspiring reminders of American history and of the ideals upon which this America was founded.

Many visitors from your home countries come to Washington every year and see many of the places you have this week. But very few of your countrymen and women have had the chance to see American life up close, in cities and towns across the country.

Fewer still have had the opportunity to live with American families and study in American schools. Much of the world only knows America from television or movies or what they see on the news. You know us better, through your own eyes and your own experiences and I hope they were positive experiences.

Senator Lugar and I are great believers in this program. We believe that the people of the Islamic world and the people of the United States need to do more to understand each other and work together, so that all our peoples can live in peace.

But we need your help. This year, you've been more than students. You've also been teachers, sharing with your American families and friends your perspectives on your homes, your families, and your countries.

Within a few days, all of you will be returning to your homes. I'm sure you'll all be glad to see your parents, your brothers and sisters, after so long an absence.

When you get home, I hope you'll continue to be teachers – to share with your families and friends what you've learned about the United States. I hope you'll be bridge builders and work to create trust and understanding among our countries and cultures. If you do that – with the same dedication and determination that you brought to America, I'm confident you'll succeed.

Remember, always, that you have friends here in Washington and across the United States.

Cultural Bridges Fact Sheet

The Cultural Bridges program was established by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Senator Richard G. Lugar (R-IN) in October of 2002 after the September 11th terrorist attacks. The program was designed to provide scholarships for secondary school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend up to one academic year in the U.S. The students live with host families, attend school, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. Upon their return the students will apply their leadership skills at home. 160 students participated in the 2003-04 academic year from Nigeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, West Bank/Gaza, Egypt, Kuwait, Syria, Yemen, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. In the 2004-05 year, the number of participants is 450 and the list of countries expands to include Iraq, Morocco, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Algeria, Bangladesh, and the Israeli Arab community. Countries for further expansion include India, Saudi Arabia,

United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar.

Goals

1. Expand communication between the people of the United States and the partner countries in the interest of promoting mutual understanding and respect.
2. Promote international security and peace by educating American and foreign participants about each other, thereby alleviating misunderstanding and making for a better informed citizenry able to deal more effectively with international issues.
3. Cultural Bridges students will acquire an understanding of American values, the qualities of leadership, and important elements of a civil society. This will include concepts such as civic responsibility/ volunteerism, the idea that citizens can and do act on their own to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law.

Key Components

- Merit-based selection with an emphasis on a broad socio-economic diversity
- Selection of U.S. host families that are committed to promoting mutual understanding and respect and sensitive to the needs and concerns of the students
- Tailored orientation programs for the students, host families and schools that equip everyone with the tools and understanding needed for success
- A scientifically-designed evaluation plan
- The formation of alumni associations in which students can engage in action plans to serve their communities; tracking and surveying alumni over the long term.

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